

Dear Colorado River Basin Roundtable members:

The Crystal River Caucus Board is submitting this letter for your consideration at your November 25, 2019 Roundtable meeting addressing the Water Supply Reserve Fund Grant Application before you today. The application has been made by the West Divide Water Conservancy District and the Colorado River Water Conservation District to fund a feasibility study to develop a plan for augmentation in the Crystal River Basin because of a legal water supply gap that is being faced by some Crystal River water users.

At our regular meeting on November 14, 2019, the Crystal River Caucus discussed that grant application, whose stated purpose is to conduct a study to address the legal water supply-demand gap being faced by some Crystal River Valley residents, as well as addressing the feasibility of storage to address that legal supply gap. The Caucus was not included in any outreach regarding the funding application submitted by the West Divide and the Colorado River Districts at some point during the past summer. As a result, we were left to information that been shared in local newspapers and via residents. Due to the need to act before your meeting on November 25 and the lack of any formal presentation from the grant applicants, the Caucus was unable to discuss this application in a manner that we would have liked.

With our challenging history with both the Colorado River Water Conservation District and the West Divide Water Conservancy District on other potential impactful water projects in our valley, which our Caucus has opposed, our Caucus is apprehensive when it comes to water issues, especially those that have not included us in their outreach. The Crystal Caucus is a recognized advisory body to the Pitkin County Commissioners and part of the overall governance structure in Pitkin County. It is within our purview to comment on and review issues and projects that occur within our boundaries. Furthermore, our Caucus continues to support and adhere to our Crystal River Valley Master Plan, which includes support for the Wild and Scenic Designation of the Crystal River. We are also aware of the conditions that occurred on the Crystal during the summer of 2018 that raised concerns for our neighbors and membership regarding the water availability, given their junior water rights.

With all of this in mind, and with our historical perspective guiding us, the Caucus unanimously passed the following resolution on November 14, 2019:

We are concerned about a feasibility study, acknowledge that we would like to protect current users, those within the Caucus area and in the town of Carbondale and Marble. We are supportive of the Wild and Scenic designation.

Consistent with this resolution and with the Caucus' on-going commitment to Wild and Scenic River designation for the Crystal River, the Crystal Caucus Board does not support a Water Supply Reserve Fund grant that would fund a study of the feasibility of a storage project on the Crystal River. Although we would support a feasibility study and augmentation plan for our area that will evaluate a range of alternatives, other than traditional storage, to address the risk of a legal water supply gap in the future, that is not the application that is before you today. Given that reality, the Crystal Caucus Board urges the Colorado Basin Roundtable not to support the Water Supply Fund grant that has been submitted by the West Divide and Colorado River Districts that is before you today, and request the applicants to resubmit a study of the feasibility of augmentation alternatives on the Crystal River that are more consistent with the goals of our Caucus Masterplan and with positions that this Caucus has taken in the past.

We encourage funding partners to recognize that additional outreach is necessary so that we can help guide and participate in this process in a transparent manner. We welcome the Colorado River Water Conservation District and the West Divide Water Conservancy District to present at one of our upcoming Caucus meetings in 2020 to allow our membership to better understand what they are proposing as well as the need for such an augmentation plan. This would allow Caucus members to communicate to the grant applicants what Crystal Caucus membership would support with respect to a study of augmentation alternatives other than storage. Without proper outreach and communication we are left with using past interactions as our guide moving forward.

Respectfully,
The Crystal River Valley Caucus Board